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BEST AVAILABLE COPYIn the claims:

Please amend the claims as shown below:

- 5 1. (Currently amended) A method for the a pre-treatment of
chips, comprising:
~~that are fed to a sulphate cooking process in which stored~~
~~chips that are at ambient temperature are heated, and in~~
~~association with this heating are formed into a slurry with~~
10 ~~alkali impregnation fluid before cooking in the digester~~
~~characterised in that the chips before heating~~
~~in a closed pretreatment step are formed into a slurry with an~~
~~acidic treatment fluid, which forms a mixture of chips and~~
~~acidic treatment fluid with a fluid fraction that exceeds 50%~~
15 ~~and that preferably exceeds 80%, after which the acidified~~
~~chips are drained such that the drained chips achieve a~~
~~remaining free fluid fraction that does not exceed 10% and~~
~~that preferably does not exceed 5%, and where acidic treatment~~
~~fluid is added essentially only to an amount that corresponds~~
20 ~~to the amount of acidic fluid that accompanies the drained~~
~~chips, after which the drained chips are heated to a~~
~~temperature that does not exceed 140 °C and in association~~
~~with the heating are formed into a slurry with the alkali~~
~~impregnation fluid.~~
25 exposing the chips to an acidic treatment device by adding an
acidic treatment fluid to establish an acidic slurry having a
fluid fraction exceeding 50%;
draining the chips from the acidic slurry so that the drained
chips obtain a remaining free acidic fluid fraction that does
30 not exceed 10%;
adding additional acidic treatment fluid to the acidic
treatment device only in a replacement amount that corresponds
to an amount of acidic fluid that is retained in the drained
chips;

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heating the drained chips by steam to a first temperature; and
heating the drained chips to a second temperature not
exceeding 140 °C while adding an alkali impregnation liquid,
the second temperature being higher than the first
temperature.

2. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1,
~~characterised in that~~ wherein the heating
of the chips essentially takes place by ~~the~~ an addition of
warm alkali impregnation fluid.

3. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 2,
~~characterised in that~~ wherein the addition
of ~~the~~ warm alkali impregnation fluid takes place in a
vessel in which a flow of alkali impregnation fluid is
formed in the vessel that flows in ~~the~~ an opposite
direction to ~~the~~ a flow of the chips.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1,
~~characterised in that~~ wherein the heating
of the chips takes place through ~~the~~ an addition of steam to
the chips in at least one step, after which the chips that
have been heated with steam are formed into a slurry with
the alkali impregnation fluid.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the~~
~~preceding claims,~~ ~~characterised in that~~
claim 1 wherein the acidic treatment fluid has a pH that
does not exceed 4-5 and ~~in that~~ the acidic treatment fluid
is added to a treatment vessel in an amount for replacement
that corresponds to ~~the~~ an amount that accompanies the
chips to ~~the~~ a subsequent heating by steam.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 5
~~characterised in that~~ wherein no continuous

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withdrawal of acidic treatment fluid takes place from the treatment vessel in excess of the a loss of acidic treatment fluid ~~that takes place in the form of acidic treatment fluid~~ that accompanies the drained chips.

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7. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that~~ claim 1 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid is constituted by a sulphide-rich liquor.

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8. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 7 ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the alkali impregnation fluid is constituted by a mixture of at least one of sulphide-rich white liquor, sulphide-rich black liquor and/or sulphide-rich green liquor, and where the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of HS^- that exceeds 0.15 mol/liter ~~mol/litre, preferably one that exceeds 0.25 mol/litre.~~

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9. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 8 ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of NaOH that does not exceed 0.75 mol/liter ~~mol/litre, preferably one that does not exceed 0.5 mol/litre.~~

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10. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that~~ claim 1 wherein a formation of a slurry of the chips in the acidic treatment fluid takes place during a period of 1-20 minutes, ~~preferably 5-10 minutes.~~

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11. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 10 ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the acidic treatment fluid in ~~the~~ a vessel is subject to an external flow against a heat exchanger for heating ~~of~~ the acidic

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treatment fluid to a temperature that exceeds 20 °C while not exceeding 80 °C, ~~preferably 40-60 °C.~~

- 5 12. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that~~ claim 1 wherein the drained acidified chips are heated with steam in at least one step to a temperature in ~~the~~ a range of 80-120 °C.